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BLACK PARENTS SEEK PRIEST'S REMOVAL: FATHER POEPPERLING IS ACCUSED AGAIN; BOY, 12, SAYS HE BEAT HIM ON THE HEAD

The Rev. William C. Poepperling, pastor of the once all-white St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church, 4001 Jennings Road Pine Lawn, who was in trouble with black parents because of his spanking of a black child because a white child told him to last February, was accused again this week of striking a child without provocation.

Father Poepperling, who has been accused by many Catholics as being too old to administer the operations of a school because he "has hardening of the arteries" and does

not fit into the programs necessary to conduct an integrated school, is accused of hitting a 12-year-old student, Jeffery Bowers, in the head.

The chief complainant against Father Poepperling in the recent situation is Michael Cooney, of the 4000 block of Stivers place, an uncle of the alleged victim, who also has a son in the school.

Cooney, the meat manager of a major chain store, told the American that he was at home about 9:30 a. m. Tuesday, May 2 when his nephew came in

holding his head and crying. Jeffery told Cooney that Father Poepperling had struck him on the head. The boy went on to explain that a white girl at the school had told the Catholic priest that he had opened her locker and stolen a ball. Jeffery, who denies the charge, said Father Poepperling, who is sole administrator of the school, saw him in the hallway and told him that he wanted him to buy the girl a new lock and ball. Jeffery said he asked why and the priest struck him on the head with his fist.

The child said that when he told Father Poepperling that he did not open the girl's locker and steal the ball, he called him a "liar" and began beating him about the head. Jeffery said he fled to his uncle's house because his mother, Mrs. Patricia Bowers, was at work.

Mr. Cooney said his nephew and his niece always stopped by his house when anything was wrong or if they needed anything. He said he went to the school to see the priest but he was not there. Cooney said he

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after his encounter with Father Poepperling and was told that the top school official was out of the city. Cooney said he discussed the matter with a Sister Elizabeth and she assured him that there was nothing she could do because Father Poepperling is the director of his school and church. Cooney said Sister Elizabeth was very apologetic but that she could not speak for Father Poepperling. Cooney said he also talked with a Father Leibrecht who informed him that there was very little that could be done about Father Poepperling. Cooney said, however, that Father Leibrecht told him that "probably Father Poepperling has cooled off" and he should try talking to him later that evening. Cooney said he had no desire to talk to the priest.

elsewhere.

Cooney said the girl's locker was not broken into, but that someone allegedly had opened it by using the proper combination. Jeffery was accused of knowing her combination number. He denied this. The priest allegedly said that since Jeffery knew the combination, the lock would be of no use to the girl so he should buy her another.

Cooney said that when Jeffery returned to the school Father Poepperling apologized for striking him and nothing has been said about replacing the lock and buying a ball. "Somebody over at the Archdiocese office must have told him something," Cooney said.

"BE PATIENT, HE WILL BE REMOVED"

Mrs. Lena Johnson, whose child was spanked by Father Poepperling in February because a white child requested the punishment, said she was assured during a meeting with Msgr. John Shocklee, head of the Archdiocese Human Rights Division, that Father Poepperling would be sent to another church "as soon as a place is found for him." She said Msgr. Shocklee asked her to "be patient"

PRIEST

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and Jeffery were talking towards the church when they observed Father Poepperling walking in their direction. He said Father Poepperling immediately said, "Get that kid off of this church lot. He's a smart aleck kid; send him to some other school because I don't want him here."

Cooney said that when he attempted to talk to Father Poepperling just to get an explanation of why he struck the child, he was told, "I don't have to talk to you about anything. I'm on my own property and if you don't get off I'm going to call

the police."

Cooney, who has an 8-year-old child in the school, told Father Poepperling that he was going to remove his child and his sister's from the school. He said he went to their classrooms and took them out "because I didn't want them going to school under the guidance of a fool like that." Cooney said that Father Poepperling is suffering from many things and his treatment of students is not just because of racial prejudices, "He is too old and too set in his ways to run a school. This is not just because the school is changing from white to black but because he is senile and does not have the ability to be administrator of a school". Cooney said that the black par-

ishoners at the church feel that Father Poepperling will believe anything that a white person tells him but ignores or has very little belief in what the blacks say.

The area where Father Poepperling's church is located is rapidly becoming all-black. The whites are moving out at a rate of three families a day. Some white former parishoners told an American reporter that they didn't move just because blacks are moving in, but because they want their children to get a Catholic education and do not want them under the supervision of Father Poepperling all day. Most persons say he is not qualified.

Mr. Cooney said he called the Archdiocese school office